News Release

CONTACT: Fred deSousa, 505-665-3430, fdesousa@lanl.gov
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LANL Reaches Waste Shipment Milestone

Waste from Cold War-era weapons production being shipped to WIPP

LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, May 31, 2011 — Los Alamos National Laboratory has reached an important milestone in its campaign to ship transuranic (TRU) waste from Cold War-era nuclear operations to the U.S. Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, New Mexico.

This month, the Lab surpassed 100,000 plutonium-equivalent curies of TRU waste shipped to WIPP, about one-third of the Lab's total.

The waste, sent from LANL to WIPP in more than 750 shipments since 1999, has amounted to several hundred pounds of radioactive residue on gloves, lab equipment, and protective clothing. A curie is a measure of radioactivity for a given element. About 190,000 plutonium-equivalent curies remain to be shipped in 10,000 containers currently stored above ground and another 6,000 retrievably buried.

"It's very important to get this waste material to WIPP. It's part of our commitment to this community and to New Mexico," said George Rael, environmental projects assistant manager for the National Nuclear Security Administration's Los Alamos Site Office. "The repository has a proven record of safe and secure operations."

As remaining drums are shipped, the Laboratory is demolishing unused storage facilities in a multiyear plan to close the waste site.

"Safety and environmental stewardship are core values within the Lab's national security

missions," said LANL's TRU waste program director Kathryn Johns-Hughes. "We're proud to contribute to WIPP's safe transportation record and the Department of Energy's national mission to disposition this material."

LANL has ramped up its TRU shipping in the last two years, with more than 300 shipments completed safely since 2009.

Generally, TRU waste consists of clothing, tools, rags, debris, soil and other items contaminated with radioactive elements, mostly plutonium. These man-made elements have atomic numbers greater than uranium, thus transuranic, or beyond uranium on the periodic table of the elements. Waste is packaged in drums or boxes that are then placed in a large, steel shipping container called a TRUPACT-II.

Shipping to WIPP is a collaborative effort. LANL crews carefully inspect and repackage Cold War-era waste drums to comply with WIPP's acceptance requirements. WIPP crews then certify the TRU drums for disposal in accordance with a DOE program approved by federal and New Mexico regulators. WIPP mobile loading crews load the TRUPACT-IIs, perform final inspections, receive a New Mexico inspection, and execute the shipment.

Cleanup and disposal of Cold War-era waste is funded by DOE's Office of Environmental Management.

About Los Alamos National Laboratory (www.lanl.gov)

Los Alamos National Laboratory, a multidisciplinary research institution engaged in strategic science on behalf of national security, is operated by Los Alamos National Security, LLC, a team composed of Bechtel National, the University of California, The Babcock & Wilcox Company, and URS for the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration.

Los Alamos enhances national security by ensuring the safety and reliability of the U.S. nuclear

stockpile, developing technologies to reduce threats from weapons of mass destruction, and solving problems related to energy, environment, infrastructure, health, and global security concerns.

About the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (www.wipp.energy.gov)

The WIPP is a U.S. Department of Energy facility designed to safely isolate defense-related TRU waste from people and the environment. Waste temporarily stored at sites around the country is shipped to WIPP and permanently disposed in rooms mined out of an ancient salt formation 2,150 feet below the surface. WIPP is located 26 miles southeast of Carlsbad, N.M.